

# **Sierra Vista Convention & Visitor's Bureau**

## **4.4 Section D: Marketing Plan**

### **Executive Summary**

The Sierra Vista Convention & Visitor's Bureau (SVCVB) marketing plan evolves year after year, but keeps in mind our core principles of enhancing the economy by marketing Sierra Vista as a destination and by building our tourism partnerships. Our marketing plan refines those elements that have worked for us in the past, leading us to this year's plan and how we plan to achieve our objectives.

While the Sierra Vista Convention & Visitor's Bureau (SVCVB) has been a major contributor to the marketing and branding efforts of the region, we've experienced a reduction in both financial and human resources, making it necessary to maximize our strengths and to take a hard look at our weaknesses. The realization that we can't compete with other communities our size leads us to some new strategies.

Realizing that financial resources are limited and refinements must be made to maximize the dollars, we've changed our standard fulfillment packet to one tailored specifically for the inquirer.

We are also redesigning our website as we realize that leaving a website stagnant, however accurate and informative, loses appeal for visitors. Consequently, length of stay or numbers of pages visited may decrease unless the website is redesigned periodically.

Year after year, our partnership with Cochise County Tourism Council maximizes our advertising dollars by creating awareness and in lead generation, but has not benefited Sierra Vista in the generation of leads derived from any type of Travel Trade/Travel Tourism program nor from their interactive marketing. Therefore our (SVCVB) marketing efforts will be to propel our Travel Trade program, which has shown a marked increase in overnight visitation from tour & travel professionals and their customers.

This spiked increase has been evident since we began contracting with the AZ Communications Group. We are continuing our relationship with AZ Communications Group to further develop our Travel Trade program as they represent us to the professional Travel Trade market, encourage additional tour operators to bring their customers, and educate the local hospitality industry in working with Trade professionals.

And we will look more toward the refinement of our media placement to include more interactive marketing.

This year, in particular, the SVCVB is faced with both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity is to increase tax revenue. The challenge is that the number of Sierra Vista hotel rooms has increased in the past year by nearly 40%, and we want to maintain as high a level of occupancy as possible as well as a strong ADR.

The SVCVB will again partner with the Sierra Vista Arts & Humanities Commission, which will strengthen and diversify our tourism assets, while engaging residents in the process. The added benefit is an understanding of how the tourism industry provides a better quality of life for community residents.

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### 4.4.1 Objectives

The primary focus of our FY09 Sierra Vista tourism marketing efforts is to promote inbound travel to Sierra Vista, thus increasing the economic impact by:

1. *Increasing the number of visitors, page views and the length of their stay on [visitsierravista.com](http://visitsierravista.com) to encourage an increase in visitors to Sierra Vista, Arizona in FY09*
2. *Increasing overnight visitation from tour & travel professionals and their customers by 30% in FY09.*
3. *Reducing fulfillment costs by 15% in FY09*
4. *Maintaining occupancy rates at their current level in FY09*
5. *Implementing the SVCVB's interactive marketing strategies by the end of 2009*
6. *Find better ways of promoting our partnership with the Sierra Vista Arts & Humanities Commission in FY09, which will support a better understanding of the arts in Sierra Vista.*

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## 4.4.2 Situation Analysis

The easiest way to explain our situation is to identify our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT). Considering those things that most influence our decision making process, we consider our resources, past efforts, trends, competition and how we intend to evaluate our performance. And while our weaknesses of not enough staff, money or time seem to always present a problem, we always look to better ways and the best practices so as not to miss those valuable opportunities.

<b>Strengths</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amazing history and natural assets</li> <li>2. Terrific weather – "It's Cooler Than You Think"</li> <li>3. Implementing AOT's Tourism University Workshop suggestions</li> <li>4. Developed a new "Cool History Brochure" &amp; "Cool Birding &amp; Wildlife Brochure"</li> <li>5. Increased lodging taxes collected from 2006-2007 by 24.11%</li> <li>6. New Hotel inventory is very high quality</li> <li>7. Maintained a 80.5% average occupancy rate in 2007</li> <li>8. Continued an International Volunteer Step-on-guide program with Ft. Huachuca.</li> <li>9. Developed a comprehensive list of and developed travel packages of area wineries.</li> <li>10. Increased stakeholder involvement by beginning a hotel association quarterly roundtable.</li> <li>11. Great staff, willing to compete with other communities that have more staff and larger budgets</li> </ol>	<b>Opportunities</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Further development of our website</li> <li>2. E-mail marketing &amp; Social Networking</li> <li>3. To develop a greater online presence using specialty ads, banners, skyscrapers and pay-per-clicks</li> <li>4. To develop new itineraries connecting to regional events</li> <li>5. Participate in the development of Cochise Origins &amp; the "Settling of the West" Video</li> <li>6. Reach new journalist outlets interested in "Experiential" and "Packaged" travel</li> <li>7. Continue to increase Direct Responses from Media Placements</li> <li>8. Develop productive relationships with on-line media and journalists.</li> <li>9. Consider hiring vendors to support staff</li> </ol>
<b>Weaknesses</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Under-discovered area</li> <li>2. Lack of commercial airlines into Sierra Vista – distance to major air connection is approx. 80 miles (Tucson)</li> <li>3. Limited budget</li> <li>4. Small staff –lack of time</li> <li>5. Inability to keep up with demand for collateral material</li> <li>6. Fort Huachuca's regulation restricting visits by non-US citizens to attractions on the Post</li> <li>7. Declining publication subscriptions; fewer freelance journalists – inadequate time to track and determine ad values</li> <li>8. Lack of current visitor survey information</li> <li>9. Decline in leads generated by print placements</li> <li>10. Poor Visitor Center location and lack of adequate signage</li> <li>11. Significant increase in hotel room Inventory threatens overall rates &amp; occupancies</li> <li>12. Low military per diem rate</li> </ol>	<b>Threats</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Communities with similar target markets, more staff and larger budgets.</li> <li>2. Possible terrorism impact on domestic &amp; international tourism</li> <li>3. Increasing gas prices</li> <li>4. National economy</li> <li>5. Border issues</li> </ol>

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## 4.4.3 Target Markets

This year Sierra Vista will focus on a tighter target to include the Affluent Boomer, Experiential Travelers, Packaged Travel markets and Interactive travel/tourism markets.

**Baby Boomer** households generated the highest travel volume in the U.S. in 2003 (registering 268.9 million trips, more than any other age group). Baby Boomer households (households headed by someone age 35-54) are the most likely to stay in a hotel, motel or bed and breakfast establishment on overnight trips (59%) and travel for business (29%). (Source: Domestic Travel Market Report, 2004 Edition.)

- Attracted to new areas and non-traditional hotels
- Seek high-quality service, with "hip" quotient
- Want local food, culture, entertainment
- Travel = service + style

(Source: 2008 ATU, AOT Destination Marketing)

**Experiential Travelers**, or as I would have called them last year the Geo-Savvy's, are one of the hottest small business trends in '06 (*Entrepreneur Magazine*)

- New standard →Experience a place from all sides
- Adventure travel, cultural travel, sports travel, agri-tourism, heritage travel, "voluntourism"—anything "authentic".

(Source: 2008 ATU, AOT Destination Marketing)

**Packaged Travel:** To include - marketing to Domestic Tour Operators; Group Leaders; Birding and Nature enthusiasts; Military Travelers; and History Buffs.

**Interactive Travelers with an interest in Birding, History & Travel:** The definition of interactive marketing comes from John Deighton at Harvard, who says interactive marketing is the ability to address the customer, remember what the customer says and address the customer again in a way that illustrates that we remember what the customer has told us. So, with 147 million Americans considered internet users and 84 million Americans who have a broadband internet connection, we intend to target this market through our new website, internet placements and Email Marketing Campaigns

(Source: 2008 ATU, AOT Interactive Marketing)

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### 4.4.4 Strategies & Tactics

**Objective #1:** *Increasing the number of visitors, page views and the length of their stay on visitsierravista.com*

- Our strategy to increase the number of visitors, page views and the length of their stay on visitsierravista will be to establish measurements, evaluate the monthly statistics and then to readjust for maximum effectiveness.
  - Some tactics will be to:
    - Track the number of visitors and to see if more begin to visit from targeted advertising placements
    - Evaluate the various pages to see which pages are more often viewed
    - Monitor the time spent on the site and attempt to determine if there are certain times of the week or particular months where there is more time spent

**Objective #2:** *Increasing overnight visitation from tour & travel professionals and their customers by 30% in FY09*

- Sierra Vista's hotel market has undergone significant growth in the past year with over 400 new hotel rooms coming online. The Group Travel market holds great potential for the hotel community as group tour rates exceed Military per diem. So, attendance in Tour & Travel Shows will be continued in an attempt to fill the newly constructed rooms. In FY009 our Travel Trade program will include NTA, ABA & targeted GLAMER shows. Additional strategies include:
  - Educating the local tourism community about the dynamics & fundamentals of product development, promotion and pricing for the Travel Trade Industry
  - Assisting in the development of itineraries, packaged tours, and other tourism products
  - Performing all follow-up for travel trade inquiries from shows attended
  - Planning, implementing and evaluating trade programs
  - Creating periodic email contact to the travel trade industry
  - Maintaining SouthernArizonaTourPlanner.com
  - Responding to all web-based Travel Trade inquiries
  - Responding to AOT generated travel trade leads
  - Attending all AOT quarterly Communication meetings

**Objective #3:** *Reducing fulfillment costs by 15%*

- We will reduce postage costs by 15% by offering a customized vacation packet, rather than providing all the collateral materials in a one-size-fits-all packet.

**Objective #4:** *Maintaining occupancy rates at their current level*

- We will maintain our occupancy rates at their current level of 80.5% by
  - Creating a stronger web presence for the SVCVB
  - Continuing with our quarterly roundtable meetings with hoteliers
  - Partnering with hotels on various media placements

- Providing enhancements to [visitsierravista.com/accommodations](http://visitsierravista.com/accommodations), to include photos, e-mail addresses and easier access to our hotel properties
- Continue gathering local monthly occupancy rates and ADR's

**Objective #5:** *Implementing the SVCVB's interactive marketing strategies*

- We will implement the SVCVB's interactive marketing strategies by:
  - Creating new banner ads, skyscraper ads and specialty ads on various websites described in Section C
  - Pay-per-clicks on specific sites
  - Creating new web pages on [visitsierravista](http://visitsierravista.com) for specific internet media placements that will have full navigation capabilities
  - Create a quarterly newsletter for opt-in visitors received from our website

**Objective #6:** *Find better ways of promoting our partnership with the Sierra Vista Arts & Humanities Commission.*

- We will reprint additional "Art in Public Places" brochures, as needed
- Continue to add the "Art in Public Places" brochures in our Vacation Packets
- We will implement the SVCVB's interactive marketing strategies and tactics, to include additional benefits to our Sierra Vista Arts & Humanities Commission with a stronger presence on [visitsierravista.com](http://visitsierravista.com)

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### 1.4.5 Tracking

#### **EZ Advertising:**

**Canadian Traveler** - is Canada's only destination focused travel trade magazine. All issues and supplements are posted on the Canadian Traveler website; we'll use our deep matrix tracking system to determine web referrals from their site as well as track our 800# inquiries.

**Natural History** – has a reader service listing in-book and online where we will receive e-mailed leads to add to our database and fulfill with our Vacation Packet. We will track online inquiries in the same manner, using our deep matrix tracking system to determine web referrals from their site as well as track our 800# inquiries.

**Sunset – Travel Planner Directory** – also has a reader response listing in-book and online where we will receive e-mailed leads to add to our database and fulfill with our Vacation Packet. We will track online inquiries in the same manner, using our deep matrix tracking system to determine web referrals from their site as well as track our 800# inquiries. For the 3-month online listing at sunsetgetaways.com we'll create a landing page on visitsierravista.com with full navigation to our entire site.

#### **Print Placement:**

**Birds & Blooms** – is a little more difficult to track. Without a reader response listing, our call to action will need to be very specific. However, this publication has only recently allowed any advertising and in the April/May issue only had 4 paid ads! We are going to take advantage of their E-Newsletter by placing our brand in front of 189,000 opt-in subscribers by placing a Skyscraper ad once a month. Our Skyscraper ad will link to a landing page specifically designed to inquirers from this newsletter. We should be able to track accurately from the Skyscraper ads as well as from the call-to-action, where we will track from caller information.

**AOT Initiative Direct Incentive – National Geographic Traveler** - also has a reader response listing in-book and online where we will receive e-mailed leads to add to our database and fulfill with our Vacation Packet. We will track online inquiries in the same manner, using our deep matrix tracking system to determine web referrals from their site as well as track our 800# inquiries.

#### **Online Advertising Placement/Production:**

- **Go-Arizona** – We receive a spreadsheet of leads on a weekly basis and respond to each lead by sending a Vacation Packet. Leads are also added into our master leads database.
- **Go-Sites** – We will track click-thru's; web response forms filled out (where the visitor requests our Vacation Packet); length of time spent on site; and unique visitors
- **Google** – Star Web Management will track the click-thru's, evaluate the performance and make adjustments as necessary



**Website Development:**

**Visitsierravista.com** – Additional modules will be added to our site including online postcards, online contests, streaming video and downloadable audio. Data will be collected using our Deep Matrix tracking system and in the number of leads generated from our “Free Visitor Info” tab. Additionally, the various Internet advertising placements will provide statistics on a weekly/monthly basis to track our advertising effectiveness and provide additional insight.

**E-mail Marketing** – Our e-mail marketing campaign will have templates developed for each season and possibly niches (nature based & history). We will track these unique visitors by tracking how many opt-in from each newsletter as well as how many click through to our site.

**Printed Material**

**Cool History Brochure** – We will track the number of requests for our Cool History brochures generated through our website via e-mail.

**Special Marketing Opportunities**

**AZ Communication Contract** – All Trip Reports, leads generated, tours booked are painstakingly reviewed and followed up with on a consistent basis by:

- Tracking the number of Trade show appointments obtained
- Tracking the number of inquiries from tour operators to develop accurate numbers and trends
- Tracking visits to SouthernArizonaTourPlanner.com
- Tracking of the actual number of tours and visitors confirmed with their destination origin

## Evaluation

On a monthly, quarterly or annual basis, the SVCVB reviews, tracks and evaluates their marketing strategies and tactics. The first six of the following refer to how we will measure and in what ways our objectives will be met. Other elements are factored in as well.

**Objective #1:** Increasing the number of visitors, page views and the length of their stay on [visitsierravista.com](http://visitsierravista.com)

- Number of VisitSierraVista.com visitors, average length of visit in minutes & seconds, page views, referrals, country of origin, etc. are reviewed to look for spikes in visits that were affected by our advertising placements.
  - We hope the numbers of visits to our site will increase due to the complete redesign of our site as well as including search optimization and other new modules. In 2007 visitors to our website increased by 16% over the previous year.
  - Our average length of visit went down last year by 8% so we've redesigned our site and will be monitoring to ensure this objective is achieved
  - We will also create a landing page on our site for all of our interactive media placements so we may better track our referrals

**Objective #2:** Increasing overnight visitation from tour & travel professionals and their customers by 30% in FY09

- Trip Reports for our Travel Trade program: Contacts made during the show and how many new tour operators are interested in coming to Sierra Vista as a result of attendance; how many tour operators have booked rooms; and how many visitors to our [SouthernArizonaTourPlanner.com](http://SouthernArizonaTourPlanner.com) site.

**Objective #3:** Reducing fulfillment costs by 15%

- On our [visitsierravista.com](http://visitsierravista.com) site we're allowing for visitors to request a more customized Vacation Packet, rather than sending all of our collateral materials in a one-size-fits-all packet, which currently costs \$2.67 each. We will track on a quarterly basis and make adjustments as needed.

**Objective #4:** Maintaining occupancy rates at their current level

- We evaluate our Hotel Occupancy, Average Daily Rates and Lodging Taxes by review tax collection and in monthly reporting collected from participating hotels. We achieved our goals last year and hope to maintain them again this year
  1. Occupancy in 2007 averaged **80.4%**!
  2. ADR in 2007 was \$75.96, a **17%** increase over 2006.
  3. Lodging Taxes Collected in 2007 were up by **24.11%**!

**Objective #5:** Implementing the SVCVB's interactive marketing strategies

- Implementing the SVCVB's interactive marketing strategies will be evaluated by:

- Tracking click-thru's
- Tracking web response forms filled out (where the visitor requests our Vacation Packet)
  - Determining Unique Visitors
  - Reviewing the States/Countries of visitors
  - Constantly trying to increase the time spent on our site

**Objective #6:** *Find better ways of promoting our partnership with the Sierra Vista Arts & Humanities Commission.*

- We'll be placing our Art in Unexpected Place brochure on [visitsierravista.com](http://visitsierravista.com) to attempt to generate more interest in public art. We'll track these unique requests and monitor for social networking opportunities.

#### ***Additional Elements of Evaluation***

1. *The number of Visitor Walk-ins per month, compared to previous years and whether the percent is up or down, and any indicators that might have affected the changes. Walk-in visitors increased 31% over the 2006 totals.*
2. *The number of callers for each advertising placement, cost of advertising placement, whether there was of Reader Service Listing and what additional follow-up is needed. In 2007 we received 21,232 leads in total from all of our advertising sources, to include those leads generated by Cochise County Tourism Council. This year we'll be doing a special landing page on our website for the interactive media placements which should will make it much easier to evaluate.*
3. *Restaurant and bar sales – tax collection increased by 6% over 2006.*
4. *An e-mail newsletter to effectively use our database to survey and capture additional information about our potential visitors. Last year we called it our 2<sup>nd</sup> Touch Program. This year we plan to become more involved in "Social Networking".*